

CITY OF SEATTLE

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SIDE SEWER PERMITS FOR SEWAGE AND STORM WATER DRAINAGE

Proper design and construction of private sewage and storm drainage systems helps protect public health and the environment, and minimizes damage to property caused by flooding.

Both sewage and storm water drainage systems on private property are called "side sewers," and a Side Sewer Permit from Seattle Transportation is required for work on either kind of system. Property owners are responsible for constructing and maintaining the side sewers that serve their property.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Side Sewers for Sewage

A side sewer for sewage is called a **sanitary side sewer**. That is a piped system that connects to a public pipeline, usually located in the street area. The public pipeline may be a **public sanitary sewer** (carries only sewage) or a **public combined sewer** (carries both sewage and storm water drainage), depending on which is available to serve the site. The Seattle-King County Public Health Department normally does not allow the use of septic systems within the Seattle city limits.

Side Sewers for Storm Water Drainage

A side sewer for storm water drainage is called a **service drain**. There are many ways to design service drains, but they all include a means to collect, transport, and dispose of storm water.

A service drain may connect to a public pipeline, usually located in the street area. The public pipeline may be a public storm drain (carries only storm water drainage), or may be a public combined sewer. Or a service drain may allow storm water to gradually seep into the soil on a site (called **infiltration**), or discharge storm water into a drainage ditch or directly into a ravine, creek, lake, or other natural watercourse. The location at which the service drain discharges the water is called the **discharge location**, and must be approved by Seattle Transportation or Department of Design, Construction and Land Use.

A simple service drain may be nothing more than a pipeline connecting roof downspouts to a public pipeline, or it may be a complex system including catch basins and a **detention** (storage) pipe with a flow control device to limit the rate at which water leaves the site. (The Department of Design, Construction and Land Use determines whether or not detention will be required for a project.) The service drain includes the entire system, beginning with catch basin and downspout connections, and ending with discharge of the water on the site (infiltration) or to a discharge location off the site.

When a Side Sewer Permit is Required

The City of Seattle requires a Side Sewer Permit before work on a side sewer begins, including installation, alteration, repair, capping, or removing of the side sewer. For new construction, property owners or contractors must obtain a Side Sewer Permit for the service drain before a permit for the sanitary side sewer, or both may be included on the same permit application.

Master Use Permit or Building Permit Plan Review

When a project requires a Master Use Permit or a Building Permit, the review and approval of the design of the side sewers begins when the property owner applies for the permit.

During review of the proposed project plans, the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use also approves the discharge location and determines if detention with controlled release will be required based on Seattle Transportation records. The Department of Design, Construction and Land Use will also determine if one of its standard designs for detention may be used for the project, or if a formal Drainage Control Plan prepared by a professional civil engineer will be required.

The property owner must apply for the Side Sewer Permit after the Master Use and Building Permits are approved and before construction of the side sewer begins.

If a project requires neither a Master Use Permit nor a Building Permit, Seattle Transportation will review the layout of the side sewer at the time the application for the Side Sewer Permit is submitted.

Planning Required Before Applying for a Permit

Before applying for a Side Sewer Permit, the applicant needs to know what alternatives for discharge locations are available to the site. If this planning has not already occurred during plan review for a Master Use Permit or Building Permit, the staff at Seattle Transportation, Street Use Office will advise the applicant. They will refer to public records to learn the location of public storm drains, public sanitary sewers, and public combined sewers, and will determine which discharge locations may be used.

In situations where public facilities are not available and there are no suitable alternative discharge locations to serve the site, new public facilities must be installed. The new facilities must be constructed before Seattle Transportation will issue the Side Sewer Permit, unless the same contractor is installing both the new facilities and the side sewer.

The installation of new public facilities for drainage or sewage is very expensive and should be considered before investing in a site.

Design Specifications for Side Sewers

Seattle Transportation's specifications for side sewers include requirements such as type, size and grade of pipe, the slope of the pipe, and the minimum depth of coverage at the property line and the curb. There are also design requirements for pumps, storm water detention, and infiltration. Separate publications on these subjects are available at Seattle Transportation, Street Use Counter (Room 501 Municipal Building, 600 4th Avenue), the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use Permit Center (720 2nd Avenue), or telephone (206) 684-5040.

Who May Apply for a Side Sewer Permit and Perform the Work

The person or firm who will install the side sewer must also apply for the Side Sewer Permit. If a part or all of the work will be done in a public street or right of way, a side sewer contractor registered with Seattle Transportation must apply for the permit and perform the work. If the work is only on private property, the property owner may submit the application and do the work, or may hire a contractor that is not registered with Seattle transportation. However, a contractor that is not registered must submit a letter or authorization from the property owner along with the permit application.

If the service drain will discharge into the street gutter through a pipe in the curb, the property owner or an unregistered contractor may perform the work, but he or she must first obtain a Side Sewer Permit from Seattle Transportation.

To become registered, side sewer contractors must meet certain requirements, including demonstrating a knowledge of City of Seattle standards and procedures for working in public street areas.

How to Prepare the Application

Applications for a Side Sewer Permit are submitted in person to Seattle Transportation, Street Use Section, Room 501, Municipal Building, 600 4th Avenue, Seattle.

The application includes a sheet of onion skin paper on which the applicant draws a sketch of the side sewer system. For new construction and building additions, the service drain shown on the application must agree with the service drain shown in the plans submitted as part of the building permit application.

The application also includes information identifying the property, the owner, and the contractor that will perform the work. The permit is good for 90 days, unless renewed, and must be posted at the job site.

Side Sewer Fees

Seattle Transportation charges a fee for Side Sewer Permits to cover the cost of administration and for inspection. This fee is in addition to the drainage plan review fee charged for certain projects when plans are reviewed as part of a Master Use Permit or Building Permit application.

The Side Sewer and Drainage Permit fees vary depending on the complexity of the system and the type of building. A fee schedule is available from Seattle Transportation, Street Use Office (Room 501 Municipal Building, 600 4th Avenue), or call (206) 684-5283.

Call for an Inspection

After the sanitary side sewer is installed, but before it is covered, the applicant notifies Seattle Transportation's Street Use Section that the project is ready for inspection. The inspector will schedule an appointment during regular business hours with the person who obtained the permit.

The inspection includes placement of pipe, type of materials, workmanship, and other specifications.

The property owner or contractor must test all side sewers ten feet or more in length for leakage while the inspector is present.

After the Seattle Transportation inspector has approved the service drain, Seattle Transportation will fill any part of the trench that is under street paving, will patch the street, and will bill the contractor for the work. The contractor is responsible for filling the trench between the curb and the property line so that no significant setting occurs for at least one year.

Payment is due within 30 days of the date of any invoice. Any invoice more than 90 days past due will be forwarded to a collection agency or the City Attorney's office for collection. All past due amounts will accrue interest at twelve percent (12%) per annum. In the event suit is commenced to collect on unpaid invoices, the prevailing party will be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation.

For more information:

Street Use Section
Seattle Transportation
Room 501, Municipal Building 600
4th Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

Telephone: (206) 684-5253.